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Item 6 of the provisional agenda**

LC/NAIROBI

REPORT OF THE THIRD ECA/AAU CONFERENCE OF VICE CHANCELLORS, PRESIDENTS AND RECTORS OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN AFRICA

Executive Summary

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I. Introduction

1. The Third Conference of Vice-Chancellors, Presidents and Rectors of Institutions of Higher Learning in Africa was convened in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 19-21 January 1987. The Conference deliberated not only on its theme, "The Future of Higher Education in Africa and Africa's Long-Term Development Problems, 1988-2000", but also on the new priority measures for recovery and development, with a view to defining the role of the institutions in facilitating the implementation of these measures in the short and medium terms - the next five years - and at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

2. There were in attendance, representatives from 36 institutions of higher learning in Africa, and observers from 11 international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

II. Summary of Proceedings

The AAU Secretary-General's Report

3. The Secretary-General of the AAU presented a report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Second Conference of Vice-Chancellors, Presidents and Rectors of Institutions of Higher Learning in Africa, particularly on the implementation of the Mbabane Programme of Action. The Conference expressed regret at the low rate of implementation of the second conference recommendations and the Mbabane Programme of Action. The problem of communications, co-ordination and reporting was singled out as the main limitation on the implementation of the recommendations of the second conference. It was agreed that in order to remove this constraint, the institutions should be kept in constant touch with each other perhaps through the publication of a monthly or quarterly bulleting covering activities being undertaken in the institutions.

A. Africa's Development Priorities and the Role of the Institutions of Higher Learning: The Next Five Years

4. The Conference proposed areas in which the institutions could develop training, research and consultancy programmes for the needs of Africa's short- and medium-term recovery and development. These areas included economic and financial management, including debt management; agricultural rehabilitation and development, including soil and water conservation, drought and desertification control, the production of agricultural inputs, tools and equipment, etc. Modalities of developing programmes at the national, subregional and regional levels were also proposed, and a number of suggestions were made regarding the strengthening of university capabilities to develop their community outreach programmes.

5. The Conference emphasized the tremendous constraints imposed by the inadequacy of financial resources available to the Institutions, by their own internal structural limitations and by the inadequacy of encouragement from government, which made it difficult for them to fulfil their developmental roles.

6. In sum, the Conference recommended that:

(i) While all African Governments should endeavour to increase their allocations to the institutions, the institutions themselves must show initiative in tapping all possible sources available to them, including a better utilization of the resources available within their walls, to supplement the meagre financial assistance provided them by their governemnts.

(ii) The ECA should be requested to extend its advisory services to the institutions, to propose to them alternative means of raising funds to support their involvement in the many areas of development in which their services will be needed.

(iii) The ECA should also be requested to propose existing institutions in which post-graduate programmes could be concentrated and developed for use by all institutions within the continent.

(iv) A mechanism should be put in place, perhaps within the framework of the AAU, through which information on research proposals, on-going research and the findings of research could be disseminated regionwide to attract support or interest from commerce and industry.

B. <u>The Future of Higher Education in Africa and Africa's Long-term Development Strategies</u>

7. The Conference emphasized the need to build bridges between universities and their governments and communities, and the need to create mechanisms for a continuous dialogue with government to foster a more active participation of the institutions in the implementation of development programmes. The importance of further developing university outreach programmes to be of greater service to the community was stressed, as was the need to strengthen inter-institutional co-operation for the development of research and teaching programmes.

8. The following recommendations were made:

(i) Apart from what may be done to disseminate information on the research and consultancy activities being carried out by unviersities at the national level, the AAU should serve as a centre for gathering all such information for wide dissemination to all African countries.

(ii) Continuing education programmes should be further expanded to cater to the workforce; tailor-made training programmes should be emphasized so that specific problem areas are addressed in a timely manner; and refresher courses should be developed to upgrade the skills of the workforce and enable it cope with changing patterns at the work place.

(iii) A special programme of seminars should be instituted by the universities to provide an atmosphere for deep reflection and the exchange of ideas between policy makers at the national level.

C. Science and Technology in the Solution of Africa's Longterm Development Problems

9. In outlining what universities in Africa could do in the areas of science and technology, it was reiterated that research should be made relevant and targeted to key areas. Areas of traditional science and technology should be given a place when implementing science and technology activities, and scientific literature campaigns should be mounted to assist traditional systems to modernize their technologies. It was also stressed that African universities should step up their consultancy activities in the field of science and technology and redefine their roles in the promotion of science and technology for development.

10. Participants stressed the need for students to be made aware of the contemporary world in the area of science and technology. Courses should be designed to sensitize students to new developments in science and technology. The use of the computer must be introduced in undergraduate courses. In order to infuse a practical element into the teaching of science and technology, industrial attachment programmes for students would have to be strengthened and more closely monitored by lecturers. This would improve practical interaction between the lecturer, the student and the engineer or scientist.

11. Difficulties in exchanging information were pointed out. It was observed that some universities did not even have the capacity to collect, analyse and disseminate information to other universities. African universities should, therefore, initiate programmes to strengthen the management of information, including computerized

information systems, because unless Africa endeavours to improve information management capabilities and the use of the computer, it would lag behind in the collection and analysis of information for development.

D. Adoption of the Harare Statement

12. The Conference adopted The Harare Statement on the Role of Africa's Institutions of Higher Learning in Africa's Economic Recovery and Development, [Document E.ECA/CM 13/46 (Annex)] and decided that it should be transmitted to all African Governments through the 22nd Session of the Commision/13th Meeting of the Conference of Ministers of ECA.

E. Date and Venue of the Fourth Conference

13. The Conference decided that it would convene its fourth session in Cairo, Egypt, from 23-26 January 1989. That conference would be folowed by COREVIP and the general Assembly of the AAU from 27-29 January 1989.